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## **The Clinton-Gore Record on National Missile Defense**

# **America, the Vulnerable**

Despite the real and increasingly urgent threat posed by countries intent on developing and deploying weapons of mass destruction, Americans today remain vulnerable to a ballistic missile attack. This is the Clinton-Gore record. Evidence of this pervasive threat is constantly in the news; most recently, we learned of Iran's testing of its new, medium-range, 800-mile ballistic missile, the Shahab-3. While the rocket exploded shortly after liftoff, similar problems in the past have done nothing to deter Iran from moving forward with its ballistic missile program and seeking ballistic missiles of longer range.

And Iran is not the only "country of concern" [Clinton-Gore lingo for what we used to call a "rogue nation"] intent on developing and deploying weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missiles with longer ranges. The National Intelligence Council has warned that "the probability that a WMD-armed missile will be used against U.S. forces or interests is higher today than during most of the Cold War" [Robert Walpole, National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Programs, National Intelligence Council: Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States Through 2015, September, 1999, p. 5].

Yet this Administration still refuses to deploy a national missile defense (NMD) system. The most recent evidence: the Clinton-Gore Administration last month made the conscious decision to delay deployment of NMD. This decision caps nearly eight years of this Administration's refusal to defend Americans: Clinton and Gore have cut the NMD budget; they have slowed development of a ground-based NMD system, and have not pursued sea- and space-based options that are extremely promising; they have fanned fears among our allies in Europe by failing to assure them that U.S. deployment of NMD will not lead to a decoupling of U.S. and allied security interests; and they have given the Russians a veto over our defense options by linking NMD deployment to preservation of the outdated Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

## **The Clinton-Gore Record: Eight Years of Neglect**

The Administration is quick to claim its support for continued research and development of national missile defenses. But blueprints and components on warehouse shelves will do nothing to stop incoming missile warheads possibly carrying chemical, nuclear, or biological materials from exploding on American soil. Its real record reveals a more sordid truth: For eight years, the Clinton-Gore Administration's main objective has been to deny the need for national

missile defense and to avoid any deployment. Over the last eight years, the Clinton-Gore Administration has been entranced by the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, a Cold War relic many arms control champions believe to be the "cornerstone of strategic stability." Any policies, systems, or plans that could conceivably undermine the treaty have been rejected resoundingly.

### *The First Year: Erasing the Gains Made*

One of Clinton-Gore's first acts upon taking office in 1993 was to gut President Bush's National Missile Defense program. The Democrat Administration ordered that all proposals for missile defense interceptor projects be returned unopened to the contractors who had submitted them. In December of that same year, negotiating proposals for fundamentally altering the ABM Treaty to permit deployment of national missile defenses were withdrawn, and formal negotiations for modifying the ABM Treaty were abandoned (and only reconvened in 1999).

### *Hiding Behind a Flawed Analysis*

Meanwhile, Congressional Republicans had been warning for years that the proliferation of longer-range ballistic missiles by rogue or hostile nations posed a growing threat to America's security. These warnings long were ignored by this Administration. The Clinton-Gore Administration shielded its inaction using a 1995 Central Intelligence Agency National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which judged that in the next 15 years, no country other than the major declared nuclear powers would develop or otherwise acquire an intercontinental ballistic missile that could threaten the contiguous 48 states or Canada. Yet this was a flawed analysis — for while it assessed that the Taepo Dong-2 being developed by North Korea could have a maximum range capable of reaching Alaska and Hawaii, as well as some U.S. territories in the Pacific, it excluded Alaska and Hawaii in its conclusions on the threat to the United States.

### *Vetoing Bill Because of Missile Defense Language, More Budget Slashing*

In December of 1995, the President vetoed legislation that would have required the Secretary of Defense to design a plan for deployment of a national missile defense system. In so doing, he refused to back a major defense funding bill while sending thousands of U.S. soldiers overseas to the Balkan war zone.

Three years after taking the White House, the Clinton-Gore Administration had completely gutted the national missile defense budget, slashing funding for NMD programs by 89 percent by requesting only \$508 million, compared to the \$4.505 billion projected spending level in the final Bush Administration FY94-FY99 budget plan [Stubborn Things: A Decade of Facts About Ballistic Missile Defense, A Report by Senator Thad Cochran, 9/00, p. 29]. In fact, it took a lawsuit filed in July of 1996 by Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and 40 other Members of Congress to force this Democrat Administration to spend funds appropriated by Congress for missile defense.

### *Imposing Further Restrictions on Missile Defense*

In 1997 the Clinton-Gore Administration backed two agreements to revive and expand the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, including one that would expand restrictions to prevent not just national missile defense for the American people, but also to constrain theater missile defenses to protect our troops in the field. They did so by offering to limit the performance of U.S. Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems in negotiations with Russia. The Clinton-Gore team proffered these restrictions despite opposition from Service officials to TMD interceptor performance limitations dating back to 1994. These concerns were reiterated over the next few years, and echoed by General Lester Lyles, Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization who stated, just a few weeks before the U.S./Russia Joint Statement on the ABM Treaty was agreed to, that "... we are concerned about anything that limits our ability to field an effective capability." [Hearing on FY98 Defense Appropriations before the Subcommittee on Defense of the Senate Appropriations Committee, 3/12/97]

The Administration was now applying the ABM Treaty, which was intended only to limit certain strategic ballistic missile interceptors, to theater missile defenses. Over the past three years, the Administration has refused to submit these revised agreements to the U.S. Senate — despite making a legally binding commitment to do so — fearing Senate rejection that in turn would clear the way for rapid deployment of missile defenses.

### *Orchestrating a Filibuster, Ignoring the Evidence*

In 1998 the Clinton-Gore team again killed missile defense legislation — this time it was the American Missile Protection Act — which stated that U.S. policy was to deploy as soon as technologically possible an effective national missile defense system capable of defending U.S. territory against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate). The White House threatened to veto the bill and rallied Democrat Senators to filibuster the legislation. Yet, within four months of that effort:

- India conducted a series of nuclear tests, surprising the U.S. intelligence community;
- A Congressionally mandated bipartisan commission, chaired by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, concluded that the United States could get little or no warning of ballistic missile deployments from several emerging powers, contradicting the Administration's assumption that the nation would have plenty of warning, allowing it time to deploy a national missile defense system;
- North Korea flight-tested its Taepo Dong-1 ballistic missile, demonstrating the capability to build two-stage missiles (significant because adding stages increases missile range); and
- In another surprise, despite intelligence estimates that Iran could not field its medium-range ballistic missile (the Shahab-3) until 2003, Iran flight-tested this

system on July 22. The press also reported that Iran was working on a longer-range version of this missile, the Shahab-4, with an expected range of 1,240 miles — capable of reaching Central Europe.

The Rumsfeld Commission report even criticized the Administration for dramatically underestimating the ballistic missile threat to the United States.

### **1999: A Veto-Proof Majority Forces President's Hand, Yet He Still Balks**

Only in 1999 did the President at long last sign missile defense legislation into law, but only after it passed both houses of Congress by a veto-proof majority. And as the legislation was signed, the Clinton-Gore team purposely and publicly distorted the intent of the law, claiming it did not obligate the Administration to deploy national missile defenses. As the Clinton-Gore Administration continued to find excuses to defend Americans, foreign ballistic missile threats to the United States have grown both in terms of range and sophistication.

### **Clinton-Gore Fiddle While Rome Burns**

As the Clinton-Gore Administration obstructed efforts to deploy national missile defense, the ballistic missile, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons threat to U.S. citizens, forces, and allies abroad has grown. The number, type, sophistication, and range of ballistic missiles and other weapons of mass destruction have proliferated. Underdeveloped countries once considered technologically incapable of acquiring such weapons on their own (North Korea, Iran, etc.) have bought technology, and in some cases complete systems, from countries with well-established and tested ballistic missile systems, most notably of intercontinental range (China and Russia). The result:

“Acquiring long-range ballistic missiles armed with WMD will enable weaker countries to do three things that they otherwise might not be able to do: deter, constrain, and harm the United States. To achieve these objectives, these WMD-armed weapons need not be deployed in large numbers; with even a few such weapons, these countries would judge that they had the capability to threaten at least politically significant damage to the United States or its allies. They need not be highly accurate; the ability to target a large urban area is sufficient. They need not be highly reliable, because their strategic value is derived primarily from the threat (implicit or explicit) of their use, not the near certain outcome of such use. . . .”

[Robert Walpole, National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Programs, National Intelligence Council: Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States Through 2015, p. 5]

## **Recent Decision to Delay Deployment Just Latest Example**

President Clinton recently outlined his criteria for deploying a national missile defense: he must have "absolute confidence that the system will work" and must ensure "every reasonable diplomatic effort to minimize the cost of deployment" first was made. In essence, the Clinton-Gore team demands that the missile defense system must be perfectly capable of destroying 100 percent of incoming missiles, yet also be perfectly acceptable to 100 percent of the nations that might launch those missiles!

Of course, ensuring that a system works as expected is critical and testing to validate and verify system capability is essential when building a new weapon system. But no one is arguing that the United States deploy a NMD system that doesn't work. In fact, the current test program for the ground-based system calls for 16 more flights tests, leading to a deployment as early as 2005. But the Clinton-Gore Administration decided to further delay progress toward an effective NMD system by deciding not to authorize its deployment, apparently until every portion is proved ready. That's like telling doctors, "Don't treat any cancer patients until we have a cure."

Yet despite setbacks and delays in the development and testing of a national missile defense, 93 percent of the system's "critical engagement functions" have been demonstrated to work properly — this according to Air Force Lt. General Ronald Kadish, Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. This led him to conclude that "there is no technical reason at this point, validated by independent review teams, indicating that we could not develop an effective NMD system" [Testimony before the House Government Reform Committee, 9/8/00]. If Clinton and Gore were interested in defending Americans against a ballistic missile attack, they would be citing these resounding successes as a reason to move forward on national missile defense. Instead, they've taken up a new shield to hide behind: specious arguments of 100-percent technical success — a position granting little faith to the promise and prospect of U.S. technological prowess. And as General Kadish noted:

"Most development programs have problems associated with them, especially when they are set up in order to pioneer the introduction of a new military capability. As a rule, we expect problems to emerge during developmental testing. It is not unusual for such problems to cause test failures." [Testimony before the House Government Reform Committee, 9/8/00]

In addition to flight testing, the United States needs to construct a tracking radar and a site for ground-based interceptors in Alaska in order to protect itself. By failing to authorize deployment, this Administration has delayed construction of the tracking radar by a year, and has thus ensured that the NMD system cannot be completed before 2006, even if a new President in 2001 decided to move forward with NMD deployment of a ground-based system.

## Defending the American People – or a Treaty?

Defending an antiquated arms control treaty, not defending Americans — this appears to be the Clinton-Gore's priority, as expressed by Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency John Holum who has called the ABM Treaty "one of the sacred texts of arms control." This Administration's preference for protecting U.S. security through dated arms control treaties rather than through defenses was reiterated by Holum in this 1994 speech:

"As a broad proposition, I think that arms control generally has *more to offer* our national security today than do more weapon systems. We [the Administration] look *first* to arms control and *second* — where it has failed or simply come on the scene too late — to defenses." [emphasis added]

The Clinton-Gore team has gone one step further in its zeal to protect the ABM Treaty. While proclaiming loudly that no other country will have a "veto" over our national defense, they have made U.S. deployment of national missile defense (NMD) contingent upon Russia's approval. As the President recently declared: "NMD if deployed would require us either to adjust the treaty or to withdraw from it . . . because by its very words, ABM prohibits any national missile defense" [CNN Breaking News, 9/1/00].

The catch here is that Russia (and if this Administration had its way the three other states they designate as "successors" to the ABM Treaty — Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) would have to agree to any Treaty changes. But Russia has no incentive to agree to any Treaty changes because Russia already has its own ABM system and opposes any U.S. NMD system, no matter how limited. Interestingly, no one in the Clinton-Gore Administration seems to question why, if Russia thinks such a system is valuable, the United States should be denied its own system. Wouldn't stability be enhanced if both the United States and Russia had the capability to intercept ballistic missiles from rogue countries?

## America, the Vulnerable: the Clinton-Gore Legacy

After eight years of growing threats from abroad, Americans remain defenseless. The Clinton-Gore team have done everything to stall and delay deployment of national missile defenses. The White Houses' excuses have been many and varied: The program is too risky. It is not perfect. It will harm arms control. And, it cannot be done without the approval of our allies, and even enemies.

If such uncompromising criteria were adopted for other technologically challenging but equally promising programs, the United States would never have made supersonic aircraft in the 1950's, flown to the moon in the 1960's, or mapped the human genome by 2000.

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